



Congressman Richard W. Austin

His Address In Congress, In Opposition To Bringing Convict Labor Into Competition With Free Labor.

He Demands The Use Of Convicts If Their Services Are Needed, In The Construction Of Military Roads, or Redemption of Swamp Lands.

He Considers One of The Proudest Acts of His Life Since Early Manhood, Was Fighting The Vicious Convict Lease System of Tennessee.

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H. R. 8938) to equip the United States penitentiary, Atlanta, Ga., for the manufacture of supplies for the use of the Government, for the compensation of prisoners for their labor and for other purposes.

Mr. AUSTIN. Mr. Chairman, a bill similar to this was offered to this House in normal times prior to the war, so that this is simply a continuation or renewal of a proposition to bring convict labor into competition with free or paid labor. The laboring people of this country, organized and unorganized, have been appealing to Congress for 10 years to pass a bill to prohibit the transportation of convict made goods in interstate commerce. This House has passed such a measure once or twice, but it has never succeeded in getting through the Senate, so that instead of going forward with the legislation seeking to put an end to the competition of convict labor with free labor, this House is now urged to inaugurate a precedent, establish a precedent, for this great Government to do what this House in a previous Congress decided should not be done by the States, namely, to bring their convicts in competition with honest free labor.

Mr. SHERLEY. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. AUSTIN. Not in five minutes.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman declines to yield.

Mr. AUSTIN. Now, this bill is not necessary to supply the Army's or Navy's equipment, for it only means one plant employing 420 people.

Mr. HAMLIN. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. AUSTIN. No, I have not time. In five minutes I cannot do it.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman declines to yield.

Mr. AUSTIN. I represent a textile district, and I will guarantee to furnish the government of the United States with the amount of ducking from a private plant in my town—Knoxville, Tenn.—equal to the output of the proposed penitentiary mill. There are thousands of textile mills in the United States, and I doubt not many in the district represented by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WEBB), the chairman of this Committee on the Judiciary, having this bill in charge.

Mr. WEBB. There are 220 in my district.

Mr. AUSTIN. If the Government needs these supplies, mill owners can afford to lay aside some of their outside business and come to the aid of the Government. Why not use the convicts, if their services are needed, in the construction of military roads in this country? They are absolutely essential, and we have already appropriated money which is now being expended in the construction of roads down in the neighborhood of Norfolk and Newport News. We can find a place and necessity for the work of convicts in the open air, where their labor will not come in competition with that of the skilled mechanics in the industrial plants of the South and other sections of the United States.

This great Government owes a duty to the men who have gone forward in investing their money in creating an industrial system in the United States which has given employment at good wages to a great industrial army, and Congress has enacted laws here which are requir-

ing these men to pay income and excess-profits taxes, and thus aid in financing this war. We ought to protect their investment and the honest deserving people who work for them. We ought not at this time or at any time—for there is no real necessity for it—inaugurate a vicious system which commits the American Congress to the encouragement of competition between convict labor and honest free labor.

This House has been practically unanimous on all war legislation; but I draw the line against this unpatriotic legislation, for it is not war legislation. It is proposed legislation which was attempted here in times of peace. It is not necessary, and while there has been a united Congress in favor of war legislation, I believe there ought to be united action against committing our government to this vicious system of bringing convict labor in competition with the labor of our own constituents, and I hope the Republican and Democratic Members will do what they have done in the past when similar legislation was brought forward, and will defeat it for the honor of the American Congress, defeat it for the welfare of organized and unorganized labor, defeat it in interest of invested capital and in behalf of loyal and patriotic employees who are doing their full share in the vigorous and successful prosecution of this war. (Applause.)

The Clerk read as follows: Amendment offered by Mr. AUSTIN: Strike out all after line 3, page 1, and insert in lieu thereof the following:

"That the United States convicts shall be used as follows: In the construction of such military roads as shall be designated by the Secretary of War, or on the redemption of swamp lands to be designated by the Secretary of the Interior, or on levee work on rivers to be named by the Secretary of War."

Mr. AUSTIN. Mr. Chairman, I am surprised that any opposition should be made to my substitute, because it provides for and takes care of this humanitarian feature of this bill by working the convicts in the open and not in competition with paid or free labor.

In the discussion here this afternoon, when the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. FORDNEY) was opposing this measure, he was asked by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. KEATING) about the value of the exports of cotton goods and the imports. I have the figures here for normal or peace times. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1914, we purchased from abroad manufactured cotton goods to the value of \$70,704,823 and we exported American manufactured cotton goods to foreign countries to the value of \$51,467,233, showing a balance in favor of the foreign manufacturers of cotton goods of \$19,237,590.

Mr. WEBB. Will not the gentleman be frank enough to state that those imports of cotton goods were composed of the finest kind of laces and things of that kind that we do not make in this country?

Mr. AUSTIN. Oh, we are making those fine cotton goods in this country in American mills. I am surprised that a gentleman representing 129 cotton mills located in his district should not know it. This was in normal times, prior to the war. Last year we purchased \$4,144,500 more of foreign manufactured goods abroad than we did prior to the war—for the year ending June 30, 1914. What is this

proposition? It is not to stop this convict cotton mill at the close of the war. It means to put the United States convicts in the manufacturing business for all time.

What else does it do? And let me especially have the attention of the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WEBB). The people who work in his cotton mills and in the textile mills in the district I represent are natives of North Carolina and Tennessee. They are the plain, honest, common people, and in many of the towns where textile plants are located the employees are the daughters and sons of the very best citizens that we have.

You propose to take the Federal criminals and give them an industrial education in the manufacture of textile goods; and when you turn your industrial classes adrift in the South every year they are going to seek employment in our southern textile mills, and you are going to have your constituents and my constituents, of splendid character, working alongside of men who have been convicted in the Federal courts. And who are they? They will be murderers, robbers, burglars, post-office thieves, defaulters, counterfeiters, deserters, traitors, rapists, and white slavers. Those are the people whom you are going to train industrially and turn out, several hundred every year, to seek employment in the textile mills in the Southern States. You cannot do this without the votes of southern Members of Congress, and I protest against it in the name of my constituents and the constituents of my colleagues from the South.

Mr. FESS. Will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. AUSTIN. No; I have not time in five minutes. Every time one of our brave and honest soldiers is sheltered by an Army tent, he will have the knowledge that his tent was the work of convicts. By and by every time you walk into an office building in Washington City the furniture will be the handwork of convicts and not of free American citizens. This is the entering wedge and the beginning to inaugurate a prison-manufacturing system in the United States in competition with honest, free, paid labor, and I enter my earnest protest against it.

Mr. FESS. What is the gentleman's objection to vocational training of men who are in prison? And would the gentleman prefer to have returned to his district a vocationally trained man or a criminal who will always be regarded as an outcast and a convict?

Mr. AUSTIN. I am perfectly willing that my colleague from Ohio shall have every one of these Federal prisoners go to his district instead of mine after they leave the prison. I do not want any of them.

Mr. FESS. I want those who come to my district to be trained, efficient men, and not criminals.

Mr. AUSTIN. Yes; but many of them will always be criminals after they leave the walls of the penitentiary. If you want people of that kind associated with the boys and girls in the cotton mills of your district, people of standing and respectability, you are welcome to them.

Mr. FESS. They certainly will be criminal if my friend has his way, but they will not be criminals if they are trained vocationally.

Mr. AUSTIN. Oh, the gentleman is talking about a theory. He is dreaming.

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Mr. FESS. I am not dreaming.

Mr. AUSTIN. Let us get down to earth. I would put these convicts at work on the construction of military roads. I would use them in the building of levees on the Mississippi River. I would utilize their labor in reclaiming countless thousands of acres of fertile and valuable swamp lands throughout this country.

We have tried the detestable convict-labor system in Tennessee, in the coal mines. We have had within the walls of our penitentiary factories which have been manufacturing furniture, stoves and so forth, and in normal times they have undersold the goods manufactured by honest labor. They have always succeeded in underbidding the manufacturers in all these lines and coal operators, because the convict labor costs far less than free labor.

The counties have worked them on the road; States have worked them on the public road. The union and nonunion people in Tennessee are against the use of convict labor in mines and in factories. I consider one of the proudest acts of my life since early manhood was in fighting the vicious convict-lease system in Tennessee. I appeal to members of the South. This evil is coming home first to us if this bill passes. This is not a war emergency case, and the President does not so state in his letter. We have the proof here that factories are thoroughly equipped and ready to furnish all the cotton goods the Government needs. I have textile mills in the district I represent which can make all the Government needs. There is no sensible, just, or patriotic reason for the support of this miserable bill, which deserves the strongest condemnation and opposition of every man who respects the true interests of labor. (Applause.)

Japanese Freighters Affire at Sea. A Canadian Pacific Port.—The Japanese freighter Burma Maru, of the Osaka-Shoosen Kaisha Line, is on fire off the north Pacific Coast, according to naval wireless messages received here. The crew had been transferred to Canada Maru, of the same line, the messages said.

Aask For \$60,000,000. Washington.—Sixty million dollars for housing, transportation and other war needs was asked of Congress by the Department of Labor.

Send Us Your Job Printing.

Called Patriotic Strike.

The little mining town of Gebu, Wyo., is 100 per cent patriotic. An assistant postmaster was given a deferred draft classification because of his job. All the miners in the village—200 strong—went out on strike as a result.

The strike lasted thirty-six hours until the assistant postmaster agreed to enlist. Whereupon the miners called a mass meeting and voted money from the union treasury to care for the man's family during his absence. Only four of the 200 strikers were born in America.

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PLAN TO AVOID LABOR TROUBLES

Standard Oil Company Makes Move to Promote Better Understanding.

TO HOLD JOINT CONFERENCES

Officers of Corporation and Representatives of Employees Agree on Method—Hope Project Will Lead to Closer Co-operation and More Definite Unity of Interest.

Asperity is disappearing in the relationship between employers and employees. These elements are constantly acquiring a better understanding of the fact that their interests are common interests. Further proof of this is found in the recent communing of officials of the Standard Oil company of New Jersey with representatives of their employees. During recent years acute labor troubles have marred the serenity of industrial relationships in Bayonne and other places where this organization is established.

At the suggestion of the company's officials representatives of the employees from all the plants not long ago partook of dinner with the company's officers at 26 Broadway, New York city. The representatives of the employees had been elected to this honor by 92 per cent of all the employees. The company presented a plan of labor relationship of which the men approved, after the primary object of the dinner, that of "getting better acquainted," had been achieved.

According to this plan there will be joint conferences between the workers and their employers at least quarterly. Matters of mutual interest and concern are to be discussed at these meetings. At the call of the president of the company a joint conference of all employees' representatives and all company representatives is to take place annually.

Included in the plan is the organization of an employment department at each of the plants. This is to take over the business of hiring and firing the men. Formerly this privilege rested in the hands of foremen. Among the rules under which employees are to be selected is this: "No discrimination to be made on account of membership in any church, society, fraternity or union."

Extension of the scope of the representation plan is expected in the near future. The declared object of the company is "a closer co-operation and more definite unity of interest between the company and its employees, whereby workers will always have a ready means of bringing their views to the definite attention of the officers of the company."

Great industrial organizations like those of the Standard Oil companies are finding that something of this nature is valuable in taking the place of the personal relationships which prevailed between employer and employee in early days. Continuous industrial peace is thus invoked.

FLAGS SENT SHIP WORKERS

Chairman Hurley Shows Employees They, Too, Are Soldiers Helping to Win the War.

Workers in the country's shipyards now have service flags to hang in their windows to show they, too, are doing soldier work. To drive home to every shipbuilder that his labor, often obscure, is real war service, Chairman Hurley of the shipping board has sent every worker an individual service flag, accompanied by a personal letter recognizing his contribution toward winning the war.

At the same time Mr. Hurley asked each man to write back to him in six months relating his progress and making suggestions for the betterment or hastening of the work. If the man does that, he will then be sent a more durable service flag in cloth. Scores of workers already have replied to the letter promising their utmost effort.

Chicago Labor Patriotic.

Organized labor in Chicago is to go the limit in backing up the war program of the government, it was said, even to the point of helping the federal authorities to break strikes on war work.

In keeping with their promise to Washington of no wartime strikes, it was learned that the Chicago Building Trades council officials have agreed to support the army quartermaster's corps in any steps the military authorities take to complete the electrical work of the Pennsylvania railroad terminal freight building.

Bankers Found Guilty.

Chicago, May 15.—Three officers of the Auburn state bank, Chicago, which was wrecked a year ago, were found guilty of embezzling the bank's funds. Under the indeterminate sentence law they are subject to imprisonment from one to 10 years.

The convicted men are Thomas McFarland, Mark P. Bransfield and William J. Cline.

Would Settle Streetcar Disputes. Washington, May 15.—Three officers of the war labor board, were authorized by the board to undertake settlement of street railway labor controversies in Cleveland and Detroit. They will visit both cities the latter part of this month.

A THRIFTY PERSON

There is not a fortune nor a successful business anywhere that did not have its beginning with a thrifty person.

Someone, sometime, somehow, began to save—to save regularly the nickels and dimes, the quarters and half dollars, until it reached the hundreds of dollars, and the fortune was made. The secret of such success is that the start was made, and was kept right on saving with a system.

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U. S. SENATOR JOHN K. SHIELDS

Is Consistently Loyal to President Wilson and Supports Him In Every Measure That Tends To The Welfare of The Nation.

Extracts From His Notable and Patriotic Address On The Overman Bill In The U. S. Senate.

The Senate, as in Committee of the Whole, had under consideration the bill (S. 3771) authorizing the President to coordinate or consolidate executive bureaus, agencies and other offices, and for other purposes, in the interest of economy and the more efficient concentration of the government.

Mr. SHIELDS. "Mr. President. The bill under consideration, commonly known as the Overman bill, as I understand the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. OVERMAN), in charge of it, to state, was prepared under the direction of the President and introduced by that Senator for the same purpose.

The war-cabinet bill has been re-committed, and the other is now before the Senate for final action.

The bills propose extraordinary legislation demanded by extraordinary and crucial conditions confronting the country. They seek to accomplish the same ends, differing chiefly in the repository of the powers to be conferred for those purposes.

It will be somewhat tedious to the Senate, but I believe the importance of this legislation will justify a brief analysis of these bills and a comparison of their respective provisions.

Mr. President, I think that the provisions of the war-cabinet bill violate the fundamental law by encroaching upon the constitutional powers of the President as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy.

The war cabinet could take absolute charge of the conduct and prosecution of the war. The President would not have the authority to initiate or formulate any plans or policies for its prosecution. His power as Commander in Chief would be destroyed. He would be subject to orders of the War Cabinet.

I understand the powers proposed to be conferred to the President under the Overman bill are chiefly executive powers and not those which he has as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy. What I am now especially discussing are the provisions of the war-cabinet bill which cover the authority of the President as Chief Executive and as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy.

There is no question in my mind, that the President, as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, under the Constitution and statutory authority given him by Congress and that which should and can be given him, will have all the powers necessary to enable him to conduct this great war to a victorious conclusion without the violation of any principle of the Constitution. If he has not now sufficient authority to prosecute the war with that speed and efficiency necessary to victory, Con-

gress has the power to give it to him and should do so ungrudgingly and promptly.

Mr. President, there has been much said about the possibility of the abuse of the powers proposed to be conferred upon the President by the Overman bill. Woodrow Wilson needs no defense from Senators in this Chamber, and no eulogy of him or his public record as Chief Executive of Nation is necessary. The people of the United States expressed their confidence in his integrity and ability when they called him to the greatest executive office not only in their gift but in the world, and, after four years' service, reaffirmed their confidence and approved his administration by reelecting him to a second term. I hardly need to recall to Senators that during these four years more constructive legislation was enacted and more reforms successfully inaugurated than in any period of our national existence.

President Wilson's administration of the affairs of the country during that period cannot successfully assail and there are none who deny his patriotism and devotion to the interests of the people. He is recognized as one of the greatest Chief Executives that ever adorned the great office he so ably fills, and by his countrymen and all civilized peoples as one of the ablest statesmen and rulers of the world. If the personality of the present Chief Executive is to be decisive of the wisdom of the proposed legislation, there is no reason why it should not be enacted.

Mr. President, while I believe in constitutional government and strict observance of constitutional limitations, this is a time when we must liberally resolve all doubts concerning the validity of measures of legislation intended to strengthen the executive branch of our Government in the performance of the great, responsible, and solemn duties which it is called upon to discharge. I do not fear that the President of the United States will abuse the great powers proposed to be conferred by this bill. We are involved in the greatest war of all history, with the best prepared, most efficient, and powerful nation of the world, and we must use all of our resources and devote all of our energies to bring it to a successful and victorious conclusion. There is no middle ground and no compromise—it is war to the knife and knife to the hilt; it is victory or subjugation. The indomitable spirit and unchangeable determination of the American people are aroused and fixed. We will fight to the end and we will conquer. There can be no safe and enduring peace but one made in Berlin and dictated by the President and Congress of the United States.

Four persons were killed and 30 injured, the result of derailment of the Buffalo express, westbound, on the New York Central lines, near Albany, N. Y.

Central Trust company of New York agreed with Director General McAdoo to loan the New York Central lines \$6,000,000 for six months at 6 per cent interest.

James Madison Thompson, society man of Baltimore, was fined \$25 for failing to register under the Maryland compulsory work law. Court ordered him to obtain employment immediately.

Sergeant Ernest Flentje, Cambridge, Mass., was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment for unpatriotic utterances. Witnesses said he criticized the president and America's cause in the war.

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